

# READING INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

## Press Releases

### ABOUT PRESS RELEASES

A **press release**, or **news release** is a document that used to give information to news organizations. A press release might announce

- an upcoming lecture, conference, or performance
- a newly published book
- the results of a scientific study
- the winners of awards or honors
- a change in leadership at an organization or a company

The purpose of a press release is to encourage the media to report on the event. Press releases are also written to influence the way writers cover an event.

### READING STRATEGY

#### Distinguishing Between Fact and Opinion

Journalists need to **distinguish between fact and opinion** when reading press releases.

- A **fact** is a statement that can be proved true.
- An **opinion** is a judgment or viewpoint that can be supported by facts and well-reasoned arguments, but not proved.

You should be able to tell the difference between facts and opinions when reading a press release or any other public statement.

Use the information in the chart to help you distinguish between facts and opinions as you read a press release.

#### Identifying Facts and Opinions

##### Facts

- can be proved true
- can be verified through proof or experiment, or confirmed by an authority

**Example:** "Professor Gates is coeditor . . . of the encyclopedia *Encarta Africana*."

**Example:**

##### Opinions

- cannot be proved true or false
- are judgments or viewpoints
- may be supported by facts, arguments, or persuasive emotional appeals

**Example:** Gates is a "relentless and outspoken champion for tolerance through understanding."

**Example:**



### Reading Press Release

Press releases include facts that tell who, what, when, where, and why. Underline this information in the first paragraph.

## NEWS RELEASE

The Echo Foundation *Voices Against Indifference Initiative*  
The Henry Louise Gates, Jr., Project • November 11, 2003 • Charlotte, NC

### THE ECHO FOUNDATION BRINGS HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR., TO CHARLOTTE; Noted Scholar, Literary Critic To Hold Public Lecture, Student Dialogue Nov., 11th

September 26, 2003 (Charlotte, NC) - Henry Louis (Skip) Gates, Jr., chair of Harvard's African and Afro-American Studies department and director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute, will be in Charlotte, Tues., Nov. 11 for a public lecture, student dialogue and an adult leadership forum as part of The Echo Foundation's *Voices Against Indifference Initiative*. Nobel Laureate for literature Wole Soyinka will introduce Gates's lecture, "W.E.B. Du Bois and the *Encyclopedia Africana*," at 7 P.M. at Spirit Square's McGlohon Theatre, 345 N. College St. **Call 704. 372.1000 for reserved seats: individual (\$20) and student groups (\$5). Call 704.347.3844 for patron tickets (\$65),** which include a pre-event reception with Gates and Soyinka at the Noel Gallery, 401 N. Tryon St.

The *Voices Against Indifference Initiative* is an Echo Foundation program that brings speakers to Charlotte whose personal experience illuminates the power of the individual to have a positive impact on humanity, through moral courage, action, and words.

Gates will share his story in several community venues, on Nov. 11. Some 400 students and teachers from Charlotte area private and public high schools are studying curriculum materials to prepare for the Gates dialogue at Providence Day School, from 11:15 - 12:30 P.M. Plans are also underway for an adult leadership forum with Gates about

social capital issues, and he will be the featured guest on *Charlotte Talks* with Mike Collins at 9 A.M. on WFAE Radio (90.7 FM).

A relentless and outspoken champion for tolerance through understanding, Gates has earned numerous awards and accolades for broadening the discourse on African American literature and cultural tradition in his various roles as an educator, scholar, literary critic and writer. One recent accomplishment, the completion of *Encarta Africana*, is the result of his 25-year quest to realize the dream of W.E.B. Du Bois. The renowned early twentieth century black intellectual and civil rights leader envisioned a comprehensive encyclopedia about the entire black world that could be used as an instrument to fight racism by building greater awareness and understanding of the African culture. The 2.25 billion-word encyclopedia project, coedited by Gates and Princeton professor K. Anthony Appiah, and published in hardbound print and CD-ROM format, was dedicated in memory of Du Bois and in honor of Nelson Mandela on Martin Luther King's birthday, Jan. 19, 1999.

###

NOTE TO THE EDITORS: The following page includes more detailed information about Gates and The Echo Foundation. Photos are available through The Echo Foundation. This statement explains the purpose of the program that sponsors Gates's speech. This paragraph presents a mix of facts and opinions about Gates's back-ground and accomplish-ments. The first sentence might provide journal-ists with a good quotation for a news story. Key facts answering the questions who? what? when? where? and why?

The Echo Foundation  
926 Elizabeth Avenue • Suite 403 • Charlotte, NC 28204  
[www.echofoundation.org](http://www.echofoundation.org)



#### Reading Strategy

Readers of a press release must **distinguish between fact and opinion**. List two words that show a statement of opinion in the paragraph before NOTE TO THE EDITORS.

#### Reading Check

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. will be speaking at a program. Underline the purpose of the program.

## Reading Informational Materials

**Press Releases** give information on the organization that sponsors the event and the press release. Place a star next to the paragraph that has this information.



## Read Fluently

Writers sometimes use semi-colons instead of commas to separate the different pieces of information. Circle the semi-colons in the third paragraph.



### ABOUT HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.

*W.E.B. Du Bois Professor of the Humanities,  
Harvard University Chair of Afro-American Studies  
Director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Research*

Professor Gates is coeditor with K. Anthony Appiah of the encyclopedia *Encarta Africana* published on CD-ROM by Microsoft (1999), and in book form by Basic Civitas Books under the title *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (1999). He is the author of *Wonders of the African World* (1999), the book companion to the six-hour BBC/PBS television series of the same name.

Professor Gates is the author of several works of literary criticism, including *Figures in Black: Words, Signs and the 'Racial' Self* (Oxford University Press, 1987); *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (Oxford, 1988), 1989 winner of the American Book Award; and *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars* (Oxford, 1992.) He has also authored *Colored People: A Memoir* (Knopf, 1994), which traces his childhood experiences in a small West Virginia town in the 1950s and 1960s; *The Future of the Race* (Knopf, 1996), coauthored with Cornel West; and *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man* (Random House, 1997). Professor Gates has edited several anthologies, including *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (W. W. Norton, 1996); and *The Oxford-Schomburg Library of Nineteenth Century Black Women Writers* (Oxford, 1991). In addition, Professor Gates is coeditor of *Transition* magazine. An influential cultural critic, Professor Gates's publications include a 1994 cover story for *Time* magazine on the new black Renaissance in art, as well as numerous articles for *The New Yorker*.

Professor Gates earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in English Literature from Clare College at the University of Cambridge. He received a B.A. *summa cum laude* from Yale University in 1973 in English Language and Literature. Before joining the faculty of Harvard in 1991, he taught at Yale, Cornell, and Duke Universities. His honors and grants include a MacArthur Foundation “genius grant” (1981), the George Polk Award for Social Commentary (1993), Chicago Tribune Heartland Award (1994), the Golden Plate Achievement Award (1995), *Time* magazine’s “25 Most Influential Americans” list (1997), a National Humanities Medal (1998), and election to the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1999).

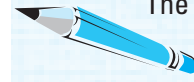
#### ***ABOUT THE ECHO FOUNDATION***

The Echo Foundation was founded in 1997 to carry on the message that Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel brought to Charlotte that year—a call to action for human dignity, justice and moral courage. Its mission is “to sponsor and facilitate those voices which speak of human dignity, justice and moral courage in a way that will lead to positive action for humankind.”

---

The Echo Foundation  
926 Elizabeth Avenue • Suite 403 • Charlotte, NC 28204  
[www.echofoundation.org](http://www.echofoundation.org)

#### Reading Check



The article includes information on accomplishments and education. Underline the sentences that tell about Gates’s education.

## APPLY THE SKILLS

### THINKING ABOUT THE PRESS RELEASE

1. What is the topic of Henry Louis Gates's public lecture?

---

2. Based on information in the press release, why do you think Gates is speaking on this topic?

---

---

### READING STRATEGY

3. Find two facts in the press release that support this opinion:  
Gates is an influential cultural critic.

---

---

4. Why do you think the Echo Foundation invited Gates to speak?  
Use at least two facts and one opinion from the press release in your response. Be sure to **distinguish between facts and opinion** in your response.

---

---

---

### TIMED WRITING: EVALUATION (30 minutes)

Write a newspaper article that reports the event announced in this press release. Be sure to include the facts.

Answer these questions to get started.

- Who? \_\_\_\_\_
- What? \_\_\_\_\_
- When? \_\_\_\_\_
- Where? \_\_\_\_\_
- Why? \_\_\_\_\_